GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4529
ANSWERED ON:07.09.2012
WORKERS HELD HOSTAGE IN ANGOLA
Sugavanam Shri E.G.

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 1000 Indian workers were reportedly held hostage in Angola recently and their travel documents impounded by the company in which they were working;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has taken up the issue with the Government of Angola at the highest level;.

(d) if so, the details thereof and the response of the Government of Angola thereto; and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to protect the Indians working in Angola?

Answer

MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI)

(a) & (b) No, Madam. Indian workers working with ETA Star International Ltd. in Sumbe, Angola had gone on strike from April 16, 2012 due to non-receipt of overtime allowances in US Dollars in cash. On May 9, 2012, the workers intensified their agitation. The law enforcement authorities, including the Angolan police, were called in to control the situation. The police had to resort to firing, during the course of which one worker sustained a bullet injury. After the violent incident, 59 workers were taken into custody by the police. All of them have since been repatriated to India.

A large number of passports of the employees of ETA Star which had been pending with the Angolan Immigration Department for issue of Work Visas have since been received by the workers. Subsequently, the project has returned to normalcy after management took appropriate measures with regard to the overtime dues, welfare, passports etc.

(c) & (d) On May 27, 2012, Shri S.M. Krishna, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Government of India, spoke to his Angolan counterpart Mr. Georges Chikoti and urged a settlement of all outstanding issues amicably, on an urgent basis. The head of the Mission also met Mr. Joaquim David, Minister of Geology, Mining and Industry, Government of Republic of Angola and also relevant authorities in the Ministry of External Relations, Government of Republic of Angola and flagged the issue. Concerned authorities in the Government of Republic of Angola assured that they would monitor the situation in Sumbe so that occurrence of such incidents could be avoided in the future. With the intervention of the Embassy of India, about 650 passports have been released, with Work Visas, by the Angolan authorities till date.

(e) In order to protect the interests of Indians residing/working in Angola, the Embassy of India, Luanda has set up a group called the "India Interest Group" which is represented by prominent Indians engaged either in independent business in Angola or in professional services . The Head of Mission has been regularly interacting with the members of the group to ascertain the well-being and welfare of the Indian community, including workers.